

12 18. A method for automatically [interpreting] processing an electronic mail (E-mail) message, comprising the steps of:

(a) receiving the E-mail from a source over an electronic data communications channel;

(b) interpreting the E-mail using a rule base and case base knowledge engine; and

(c) classifying the E-mail as at least one of (i) being able to be responded to automatically; and (ii) requiring assistance from a human operator; wherein when the classification indicates that the E-mail can be responded to automatically, the method further includes the steps of:

(d) retrieving one or more predetermined responses from a repository;

(e) formulating an E-mail response from the predetermined response; and

(f) transmitting the E-mail response to the source over the data communications channel.

19. A method for automatically [interpreting] processing a non-interactive electronic message using a computer, comprising the steps of:

(a) receiving the electronic message from a source;

(b) interpreting the electronic message using a rule base and case base knowledge engine; and

(c) retrieving one or more predetermined responses corresponding to the interpretation of the electronic message from a repository for automatic delivery to the source.

13 20. A system for automatically [interpreting] processing a non-interactive electronic message received from a source, the system comprising:

a server for transmitting and receiving electronic messages over a communications channel;

an inbox storage device for storing incoming electronic messages;

a knowledge engine including a rule base and a case base, the case base having a plurality of stored cases representing past received electronic messages;

a pre-processor for receiving the electronic message and interpreting the electronic message using the rule base;